GROWING YOUNG MINDS.
BUILDING FUTURES.
Transforming Vision into Action 2017
Improving learning in the early years is a difficult, complex and extremely urgent challenge. To meet that challenge, a wide range of nonprofit organizations, businesses, educators and government leaders in Tarrant County are working together through the Early Learning Alliance (ELA).

Alliance members have a shared commitment to develop and sustain a coordinated, aligned and results-oriented system of services that promotes early learning for young children. As a result, children in Tarrant County will achieve continuing success—in school and in life.

The ELA is unique among coalitions in that members sign a letter of commitment and pay dues to demonstrate their individual and organizational commitment to the collaborative.

Another unique aspect of ELA is that it operates across multiple school district boundaries. Families and children today are mobile, and early learning doesn’t neatly fit within a school district boundary. Instead, an Alliance of organizations can work to “follow the child” and prepare him or her for kindergarten regardless of the future elementary school.

Every ELA member has an equal voice for moving the work forward. Representatives of partner organizations participate in frequent, outcome-focused discussions that encourage innovation and accountability. Members recognize that, through ELA, each organization has a better chance of achieving not only its own mission but also having a broader community reach.

Combined, Alliance members possess vast expertise and experience in a wide range of disciplines, from education to health care to economic development. Through ELA, all of these resources are being harnessed and directed toward building a strong system of early learning and development for children.

ELA is committed to shared outcomes and key indicators to track progress and identify disparities.

While there is great work being done in various regards to impact education, we must do more. It’s no secret that there remains a great need in our area and in our nation to have great public education. But, we must do more to ensure that no child’s zip code determines their future success in life. For these reasons, we are working closely with the Early Learning Alliance to improve quality early learning in Fort Worth.”

Fort Worth Mayor Betsy Price

85% OF BRAIN DEVELOPMENT OCCURS BEFORE THE AGE OF 5
VISION
A community united to provide a strong start for all children

MISSION
Community collaboration working to ensure all children have the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life

VALUES
Equity in Child Well-Being: ELA believes that race, ethnicity, income and gender impact opportunities for children to succeed, and we must work to eliminate disparities that undermine child well-being.

Relationships: ELA believes that positive relationships among organizations, as well as people, matter in making systems work better for the people they serve.

Inclusion: ELA believes that all stakeholders in early childhood education, including parents, should have a voice in developing the policies and practices that influence healthy growth and development.

Collective Effort: ELA believes that only by aligning our work can we achieve significant, measurable change.

Communication: ELA believes that open, transparent and frequent communication is essential to maintaining trusting relationships.

A 10-Year Movement to Ensure that All Tarrant County Children are Ready for Kindergarten

ELA is focused on creating an early learning system with equity for all children.

COMMUNITY + ELA

ELA RESOURCES
Volunteer Leadership Team, Philanthropic Partners, Consultants and Staff

RACIAL EQUITY LENS

ELA ACTION STRATEGIES
Developing Professional Equity, Diversity Program, Ongoing Engagement Plan, Community Engagement Plan

IMPROVED EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM

“...the city of Fort Worth and its partners have effectively galvanized the community to take action to improve the lives of Fort Worth’s youngest children. The Early Learning Alliance serves as a model for how community leaders can build a strong coalition to improve early care and education quality and access, support educators and engage all families so that every Fort Worth child can succeed and thrive.”

Dr. Tonja Rucker
National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education and Families

50 ORGANIZATIONS JOINING FORCES IN ELA

$250M ESTIMATED MEMBER ORGANIZATION BUDGETS ALIGNED THROUGH THE SHARED FOCUS OF ELA

$240K IN VOLUNTEER HOURS

$107,660 IN MEMBER DUES TO CREATE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

$473,400 IN PRIVATE FUNDS TO FURTHER ELA GOALS BY THE ALLIANCE AND PARTNERS

$240K IN MEMBER DUES TO CREATE SYSTEMIC CHANGE

ommunity + ELA

Volunteer Leadership Team, Philanthropic Partners, Consultants and Staff

Racial Equity Lens

ELA Action Strategies

Developing Professional Equity, Diversity Program, Ongoing Engagement Plan, Community Engagement Plan

Improved Early Learning System
Early Learning Alliance Milestones

Through a shared commitment to ensuring success for all Tarrant County children, the Early Learning Alliance promotes positive changes in the early learning system. Here are some of the Alliance’s most significant milestones and achievements.

**2013**
- Fort Worth chosen by National League of Cities to be one of six cities for nationwide initiative—Educational Alignment for Young Children (EAYC)—to improve educational outcomes for children 0-8
- EAYC adopts priorities:
  - Family engagement
  - Professional development to improve quality
  - Creating system to collect and share data

**2014**
- 50 organizations join with EAYC and adopt A Plan for the Next 1,000 Days
- The North Texas Community Foundation aligns “toolbox” funding with EAYC goals and awards $120,000 to EAYC partner organizations
- EAYC convenes statewide summit of 8 largest cities; the North Texas Community Foundation (NTCF) kicks off with panel of national experts including Dr. James Heckman and Dr. Neal Halfon

**2015**
- NTCF invests $246,400 in EAYC and its partner organizations
- EAYC partners launch “Raising of Fort Worth” to extend message about importance of committing to early learning to additional sectors
- EAYC awarded Outstanding Child Care Partner for 2015 by Workforce Solutions of Tarrant County
- 28 members pledge support to EAYC with $60,550 in dues and contribute in-kind resources to accelerate systems change

**2016**
- Fort Worth City Council endorses EAYC’s Next 1,000 Days plan and adds early learning as top 3 public policy priority
- EAYC rebranded as the Early Learning Alliance
- ELA recognized as a “Bright Spot” by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Network of Opportunity for Child Well Being
- ELA selected by NTCF members as single organization to receive special grant

**2017**
- ELA adopts Results-Based Accountability for organizations to measure impact achieved together and communicate outcomes
- Private foundations provide over $160,000 to support the work of ELA
- ELA hosts training on racial equity from National League of Cities
- ELA leads the state in launching a financially supported early childhood career pathway and initiative to elevate early childhood program quality through coordinated mentoring and coaching in Tarrant County
In Tarrant County, too many children arrive at kindergarten without the skills they need, and by third grade are performing below their grade level. As a result, too many children fall behind academically and never catch up. ELA unites early education and care providers in Tarrant County through integrated initiatives that accelerate the kindergarten readiness of all children, especially those at risk for academic underachievement.

The Alliance works across the community with adults – including teachers, caregivers, professionals and practitioners – to increase the quality of early learning. ELA enhances the quality of early education by offering educational opportunities to teaching professionals and creating better learning programs for children.

The Key to Success: Kindergarten Readiness

“In order to have a college- and career-ready high school graduate, you must have a kindergarten-ready preschooler. The Early Learning Alliance is focusing our community so that every child is ready for school by kindergarten and is reading and solving math problems on grade level by third grade. Our partnership with ELA will build a foundation for our children’s success in the early years and throughout their lives.”

Dr. Kent P. Scribner
Fort Worth ISD Superintendent

Elevating Early Childhood Professional Quality

**STRATEGY A**
Professional Development Registry Campaign
Recruit, educate and empower early education providers through the Tarrant County Registry Campaign

**STRATEGY B**
Career Pathway
Develop stackable trainings and credit-bearing professional development opportunities for early education professionals to progress on a career pathway

**STRATEGY C**
Instructional Quality Initiative
Roll out a public-private partnership with local school districts, charter schools and nonprofits and researchers to improve the quality of classroom instruction, mentoring and coaching, using the CLASS assessment tool

Elevating Early Childhood Program Quality

**STRATEGY A**
Texas Rising Star
Increase the number of early care and education programs in the Texas Rising Star (TRS) system and move current TRS programs into higher ratings

**STRATEGY B**
Pre-K and Kindergarten Entry Assessment Tools
Identify an approach, or approaches, for programs to use and coordinate on common Pre-K and Kindergarten assessment tools

**STRATEGY C**
Early Childhood Data System
Assist early learning programs and inform parents on the benefits of the Texas Early Childhood Data System

Engaging with Families

**STRATEGY A**
Infant and Toddler Developmental Screening Tool
Identify an approach, or approaches, for families to use and coordinate on common Developmental Screening Tools

**STRATEGY B**
Family Forums
Create/align local parent groups to bring families’ voices forward

**STRATEGY C**
Improve Organizational Processes for Family Engagement
Develop organizational processes to provide better family engagement and community coordination

Sharing Data and Research

**STRATEGY A**
Results-Based Accountability
Create a shared data platform for community tracking and reporting on shared outcomes

**STRATEGY B**
Early Development Instrument
Present EDI results to community stakeholders and develop action plans for collective impact

**STRATEGY C**
Research Roundtables
Convene roundtables for practitioners, researchers, funders and policymakers to learn about critical sector and policy issues

ELA recognizes the role that race, ethnicity, income and gender can play in early childhood success, and seeks to create equitable opportunities for every child in Tarrant County.
Assessing the Challenge
Children and their families need committed, well-prepared educational professionals. However, early childhood professionals need more opportunities for ongoing learning – not only to increase their capacity to educate children, but to boost their careers as educators. Quality professional development for practitioners is a key to improving student outcomes. In fact, student achievement soars when their teachers receive an average of 49 hours of professional development a year.1

Addressing the Challenge
ELA has identified the Tarrant County Professional Development Registry Campaign as a key strategy for attracting, supporting and retaining well-qualified professionals to work with young children along a career pathway. This campaign will launch in the fall of 2017.

Building Public-Private Partnership
Private foundations donated $42,000 locally to draw down over $75,000 in additional federal funds for scholarships and bonuses for early childhood staff moving up the career pathway for 2017-18.

How ELA is Elevating the Quality of Early Childhood Professionals

“Professional development makes me more excited and motivated to incorporate new techniques in my classroom. It helps me to use skills in collaboration with the ideas presented. As a young teacher, I am learning more about little minds and how they develop.”

Teacher who participated in professional development at Camp Fire First Texas


21% WHEN PRACTITIONERS RECEIVE QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES, SUCH AS COACHING, STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT CAN INCREASE BY THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REGISTRY CAMPAIGN WILL HELP EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS FOLLOW A CAREER PATHWAY AND INCREASE THE NUMBER OF EDUCATORS WHO RECEIVE QUALITY COACHING AND MENTORING.
Assessing the Challenge

Quality interactions between adults and children are fundamental for strong child outcomes. Adopting proven practices in early childhood programs will ensure that more children have experiences that set them on a path for kindergarten readiness.

Addressing the Challenge

In 2016 and 2017, ELA partners identified a coordinated strategy for increasing the effectiveness of early education programs in Tarrant County through the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). ELA strives to strengthen classroom instruction for children ages 0-5 through coordinated use of the CLASS, an evidence-based assessment tool. High CLASS scores are strongly correlated with children’s school readiness. Going forward, maps and data snapshots of CLASS results will point to bright spots of success and highlight areas of greater need.

Working Toward Policy Changes

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County has adjusted its policies to promote children’s access to higher quality care by offering incentives to both the supply and demand sides of the child care subsidy system. Parents now pay a lower fee when they choose quality care, and providers get a higher reimbursement rate when they meet higher standards. As a result, more child care programs are striving to reach higher quality benchmarks.

How ELA is Elevating Early Childhood Program Quality

“The Texas Rising Star (TRS) program has helped us set higher standards for our center, and with the help of TRS we are considered one of the top early learning centers in Arlington. TRS trainings/ coaching have given my staff the necessary skills to increase the development of our children.”

Josie Villarreal
Director/Owner

Using a common metric for quality across programs for ages 0-5 will elevate classroom instruction in Tarrant County—regardless of the location or type of program. Tarrant County’s Texas Rising Stars (TRS) program has increased the number of quality facilities within the county by 35% within a one-year timeframe.
Assessing the Challenge
When all the adults in a child’s life – both at home and in school – work together to co-create the best possible learning environment, the synergy can make an enormous difference. Close collaborative relationships between all the adults in a child’s life lead to better child outcomes. Families are fundamental for supporting the achievement of their children, but too often families are not brought into full partnership.

Addressing the Challenge
ELA encourages shared responsibility among families, schools and communities to create a culture where families are leaders in the early learning and development of their children.

Proving the Concept
In 2016, a community-based approach in Stop Six – conducted by the University of North Texas Health Science Center, AB Christian Learning Center and The Parenting Center, working closely with the FWISD Historic Stop Six Initiative – determined what it will take to bring parents into full partnership through “Transformative Parent Engagement.” ELA will now extend this locally adapted approach to additional partner organizations.

How ELA is Engaging with Families

“I appreciate the family values the teachers at Sunrise instill into everyday activities. My daughter was also very well prepared for public pre-K and kindergarten after attending here – she excelled at every lesson.”
Sunrise Early Learning and Development Center Parent


This year, ELA will launch Family Forums to incorporate family voices into our work.

350 Parents and 35 organizations in Stop Six were trained in Leadership and Partnership formation in 2016.
Assessing the Challenge

Our community has lacked an organized, standard process for measuring the effectiveness of early learning in Tarrant County. Programs, families, funders and community leaders have not had the data they need. ELA has led the way in making data sharing a reality.

Addressing the Challenge

ELA has adopted Results-Based Accountability to measure results and indicators of success. These benchmarks will be the basis for communicating with the community and identifying what strategies are needed to reach key goals.

Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County conducted the first analysis in Texas of the cost of quality child care. Its findings are informing planning and policy development at regional and state levels.

FWISD administered the Early Development Instrument to 1,200 kindergarten children in nine high-need neighborhoods. Community snapshots of children’s health, development and school readiness will inform planning for each neighborhood.

Cook Children’s Institute for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment mapped risk factors to children across Fort Worth. When combined with ELA’s maps of early learning resources, a picture of areas with the highest needs emerges.

How ELA is Using Data to Inform Action

“ELA partners are excited, ready, willing and able to move forward with the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) decision-making process. With this implementation, and the use of the Clear Impact Score Card, we will be better able to share data around the work we do with children and families. More importantly, the RBA process will enable us to move quickly from talking about data to taking action and producing measurable change in the Tarrant County community.”

— Anne Ware
Research Solutions

To ensure that children have the skills they need to be successful, we need a system for sharing information with parents and providers to make course corrections.

Join the Early Learning Alliance

The strength of the Early Learning Alliance lies in the wide variety of organizations and individuals who are committed to building a strong system of early learning and development for children. We believe we can do better. If you’re interested in joining this dynamic, ongoing effort, contact ELA today. You can participate in exciting initiatives to grow young minds and build a brighter future for Tarrant County.

Member Benefits

• Extend reach and impact on system-level change
• Build collaborative solutions with peer executives from other agencies and nonprofits
• Strengthen fund development for shared initiatives and programs
• Collect and share data
• Participate in Results-Based Accountability to track both organizational and community-level results
• Increase visibility and recognition
• Share knowledge and expertise through joint learning
• Connect to similar initiatives in Texas and nationally

To learn more about membership in ELA, call 817-413-4456 or send an email to ELA@EarlyLearningNTX.org

“At a nonprofit executive, the day is over when capturing an individual organization’s programmatic impact is enough. We have to make time and room to reorganize efforts and measure our impact across organizational boundaries. It’s time to accelerate our coordinated efforts.”

— Kara Waddell
CEO, Child Care Associates

TO ENSURE THAT CHILDREN HAVE THE SKILLS THEY NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL, WE NEED A SYSTEM FOR SHARING INFORMATION WITH PARENTS AND PROVIDERS TO MAKE COURSE CORRECTIONS.
**It Takes a Village—Thank You!**

**DUES-PAYING MEMBERS**

- AB Christian Learning Center
- ACH Child and Family Services
- Ann Rice
- AWARE Research Solutions
- AVANCE Dallas
- Botanical Research Institute of Texas
- Camp Fire First Texas
- Center for Transforming Lives
- Child Care Associates
- Child Study Center
- Children At Risk
- Clayton YEZ
- Colleen Allen
- Connie Presley
- Cook Children’s Center for the Prevention of Child Maltreatment
- ECI – MHMR of Tarrant County
- Educational First Steps
- First3Years
- Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce
- Fort Worth Librany
- Fort Worth Independent School District
- Parents as Teachers
- Kathy Livingstone
- Lena Pope
- Literacy United
- Momentous Institute
- Nicole Devlin Stroud
- North Texas Community Foundation
- Pablo Calderon
- The Parenting Center
- United Way of Tarrant County
- Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County

**DONOR COMMUNITY**

- George and Fay Young
- John and Sharon Wall
- The Miles Foundation
- Rainwater Charitable Foundation
- North Texas Community Foundation
- Private Individual Donors
- Workforce Solutions for Tarrant County

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“We support ELA because they take a thoughtful, strategic approach to creating systemic change in early education. ELA members are willing to put in the hard work necessary for cross-sector collaboration. We believe ELA is a driving force in the effort to ensure that Tarrant County children are ready for kindergarten.”

Jeremy Smith
Executive Director, Rainwater Charitable Foundation